

THE DRESSING-GOWN

The stranger in the dressing-gown makes
her uneasy, like a child growing up

over the long summer holidays into
a new and nearly equal human being.

She must find ways of linking this man
who's discarded the bath-towel round

his waist, whose glasses are now a permanent
feature of his face (not just for reading

Official forms and hand-written letters,
nor a concession to the Cinema) with the

long-familiar furniture of her life.
Has he suddenly gone fat round the middle

despite the evidence of her eyes?
Has he grown out of her knowledge into

the sort of man who sends cards back from
a holiday abroad, a business trip abroad,

by courtesy of a friend, while adultering
round the corner? This is so much unlike

the man she knew, but the dressing-
gown has somehow changed their lives.

200 PERCENT BLACK

He's 100% white with two
parents and a pet.

At school and play he is black
only to those who see colour.

Marries the right girl
and digs for roots north

of his family tree.
Here the story ends.

20 years later, the fall-out
from Africa covers him

with thin ash; and he arms
himself to perform the Long March

and Middle Passage
on the same week-end.

Now he's on the newsreel
riding in Castro's jeep,

sweating through a bush-jacket,
200% Black.

-- Paul St Vincent

London England

THE ELEMENT OF NO GAMBLE

There is a powerful rain.
Under a tent
three Tibetan muleteers
are gambling with cowrie shells.

They hoist the leather dice box
and crash it down with much force.

Those shells have value.

It will please them
to give you, for nothing,
a handful of handsome copper coins
from an extinct culture.

THE FALL

Crows are peering in the window.
What have I forgotten this time?

The only crow I ever saw fall
Was one I shot.

He plummeted straight down
And was dead.

All the other crows put on
A ritual ceremony around him.